1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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chief occasion of strife among Nuer themselves. Indeed, after a successful raid on Dinka stock there is often further fighting over the booty. Moreover, Nuer tribes raid one another for cattle. Thus the Leek raid the Jikany, Rengyan, and other western tribes, and cattle raids are of common occurrence along tribal boundaries elsewhere, for to 'steal' (*kwal*) cattle from another tribe is regarded as laudable. Within a tribe, also, fighting frequently results from disputes about cattle between its sections and between individuals of the same section, even of the same village or homestead. Nuer fight on slight provocation and most willingly and frequently when a cow is at stake. On such an issue close kinsmen fight and homes are broken up. When ownership of cattle is in dispute Nuer throw over caution and propriety, showing themselves careless of odds, contemptuous of danger, and full of guile. As my Nuer servant once said to me: 'You can trust a Nuer with any amount of money, pounds and pounds and pounds, and go away for years and return and he will not have stolen it; but a single cow—that is a different matter.'

Nuer say that it is cattle that destroy people, for 'more people have died for the sake of a cow than for any other cause'. They have a story which tells how, when the beasts broke up their community and each went its own way and lived its own life, Man slew the mother of Cow and Buffalo. Buffalo said she would avenge her mother by attacking men in the bush, but Cow said that she would remain in the habitations of men and avenge her mother by causing endless disputes about debts, bride-wealth, and adultery, which would lead to fighting and deaths among the people. So this feud between Cow and Man has gone on from time immemorial, and day by day Cow avenges the death of her mother by occasioning the death of men. Hence Nuer say of their cattle, 'They will be finished together with mankind', for men will all die on account of cattle and they and cattle will cease together.

It must not, however, be supposed that Nuer live in continuous turmoil: the very fact that they are prepared to resist any infringement of their rights in cattle induces prudence in the relations between persons who regard themselves as members of the same group. It may be said, furthermore, that the great

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often received some such reply as: 'Oh well, such is our custom. We have cattle.'

I wish to emphasize, in conclusion, the following points: (1) that Nuer cultivate only enough grain for it to be one element in their food-supply and not enough to live on it alone; (2) that with their present climate and technology considerable increase in horticulture would be unprofitable; and (3) that the dominance of the pastoral value over horticultural interests is in accord with oecological relations which favour cattle husbandry at the expense of horticulture. Nuer values and oecological relations, therefore, combine to maintain the bias towards cattle husbandry, in spite of rinderpest having rendered it a more precarious occupation than hitherto.

IX

It has been mentioned that Nuer must have a mixed economy in the given oecological relations because no one source of food is sufficient to keep them alive, and that the dominant food-producing activity at each season is determined by the oecological cycle. The different elements of diet, therefore, have an oecologically determined relation to one another and these relations can be roughly plotted.

Milk foods, millet in the form of porridge and beer, a little maize, fish, and meat, are the main items of Nuer diet. Milk is a staple food all the year round, though cows probably tend to give a smaller yield towards the end of the rains owing to insufficiency of pasturage, and it is said that there is a tendency for them to calve in numbers after the first harvest and therefore to cease lactating a few weeks earlier—if this is correct it is possibly due to the hot weather in February and March bringing the cows on heat. This seasonal tendency and the respective contributions of cattle and millet to Nuer food-supply are brought out in a story in which Cow and Millet have a dispute. Cow says that Millet is a person of no importance and that it is her milk that keeps people alive throughout the year, while in time of famine they can eat her flesh and live. Millet replies that Cow's claims are doubtless just, but that when she is ripe the children are glad, for they chew the sweet stems and rub out the grain between their hands and eat it,

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and there is plenty of porridge and beer. Cow argues that anyhow porridge without milk is unpalatable and that her milk will be finished by the time Millet is ripe. It is difficult to confirm these variations in the yield of milk or to estimate their importance, but the tendency for it to rise slightly in the dry season is indicated in the chart opposite.

Millet is consumed as porridge and beer in large quantities in the months between the first harvest and departure for dry-season camps. If the harvest has been good people like to eat their daily porridge in camps, and when the camp grain-supply runs short women journey to the villages to replenish it. When camps break up and people return to their villages millet consumption increases, beer being again brewed, and in a good year there is sufficient to satisfy requirements till the new harvest is ripe. In a normal year Nuer can just tide over these months if they are economical and have been careful not to use much grain in camp. Only in the most favoured parts of the country are they assured of an adequate supply throughout the year. In most parts there is always a very narrow margin between sufficiency and want, and in a bad year starvation is not infrequent. If the crops fail people survive on milk, fish, and wild fruits, and in extremity may kill some of their beasts. Rinderpest is considered a worse calamity. When rinderpest and failure of crops occur in the same year people expect the older age-sets to be wiped out. Much suffering may be caused by excessive drought or flood, which injure both crops and grazing.

There are good and bad fishing years. Generally, over the greater part of the country, consumption of fish is very low, or entirely absent, at the height of the rains. It rises rapidly to a peak at the commencement of the dry weather, and after descending from this point of great abundance remains fairly constant through the drought, rising again in the early rains. Meat of domesticated stock is mainly eaten after harvest when sacrifices and feasts take place. Cattle are seldom slaughtered in the dry season and, in my experience, Nuer do not kill many wild animals, so that consumption of meat is very low at this time of year, though the deficiency is to some extent made up by bleeding the cows and, in rinderpest years, by eating the carcasses of its victims. On the whole the curve of meat con-

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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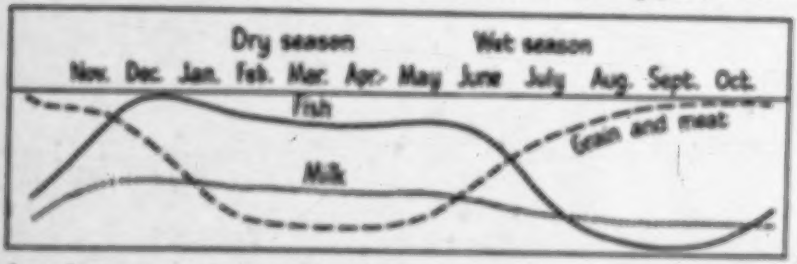
sumption follows that of grain consumption. We need not consider consumption of bush products in a normal year, though it may be kept in mind that they are very useful in famine years, chiefly from January to April.

It will be seen from this chart of relative consumption, which



is only presented as a virtual approximation, that fish largely takes the place of grain and meat as the principal food from January to June and that the time when there is most likely to be a shortage of milk and when few, or no, fish are caught is that when there is plenty of porridge and beer. 'The hungry months', as the Nuer call them, are from May to August when the supply of fish quickly diminishes and maize and millet are still ripening. The months of plenty are from September to the middle of December, when there is abundant millet, and generally much meat, while the end of this period is the best time for fishing. Nuer say that they put on flesh in the rains and lose it in the drought. We may conclude, I think, that even in normal years Nuer do not receive as much nourishment as they require. Their diet is well-balanced, but there is not enough of it at some seasons and there is no surplus to fall back on in the all-too-frequent years of scarcity. Much of Nuer custom and thought is to be attributed to this insufficiency of food. It is wistfully related in one of their stories how once upon a time Man's stomach led an independent life in the bush and lived on small insects roasted by the firing of the grasses, for 'Man was not created with a stomach. It was created apart from him.' One day Man was walking in the bush and came across Stomach there and put it in its present place that it might feed there. Although when it lived by itself it was satisfied with tiny morsels of food, it is now always hungry. No matter how much it eats it is soon craving for more.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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THE CHILDREN

857 The little children of the village spend their day in play, eating, and sleeping. The babies are often cared for by the grandmothers. The older children are called on to carry water or to help in some way. The older girl helps her mother in the routine duties of the day.

The little boy in the home plays games. He may have a cane-stalk and string for a fishing-rod and line, and sometimes a bent pin for a hook. When he is about eight years old he begins to herd the sheep each day. He often makes men and cattle out of mud and plays with them.

881 When he is old enough to have the tribal marks cut, his status is at once changed from that of boy to man. His privileges are also increased. He is now interested in securing cattle and sheep of his own.

857 The children love their folk-lore tales and the many animal stories that are told them by their elders. They believe these implicitly and fear the dreadful ogre that is usually the central figure of the story. They also amuse themselves by guessing riddles, of which they have a large number.

538 524

857 But while they are learning many things that are interesting and useful, they are learning many things they do not need to know. They learn to curse. They learn indecency in regard to sexual matters. Indeed, the child mind is full of many things that pollute both thoughts and actions. The lack of privacy in the village and family life account for much of this pollution of mind and action which infests the child. And there is no decidedly corrective method used by the elders of the village. Life was always so, it always will be so, they think.

THE NUER GIRL IN HER HOME LIFE

The life of a girl in the Nuer home is a foretaste of the life of the mother. The bulk of the work which can be done

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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●538 The Nuer language has a wealth of animal and bird stories, tales of the origin of the tribe and folk-lore. Also games, songs, riddles, and superstitions. All of these are as yet practically untouched by the pen. A sort of cannibal-ogre combination, capable of changing into an animal, is usually a prominent character in their folk-lore.

192 The language contains no word for 'thank you' as far as I have delved into it, but one does not need to be in Nuerland long to discover that the Nuer has a word for 'I am mistaken', and is willing to use it.

TIME, SEASONS, MOON, AND STARS.

[805] 821 The Nuer gauges time by moons, the light or dark of the moon. He knows the stars, and has names for many of the constellations. He is a keen observer of them and makes his own observations concerning them. Orion's belt is called 'gat rum juk'. One star is supposed to be a man leading a horse, the second star is supposed to be the horse, while the third star is another man driving the horse as he follows him.

The evening star is called 'Lipai chiing', as it is considered to be like a girl in the village waiting for the moon to come up and when it does come up, she goes away with it. Hence the name, which means 'wait in the village for the moon'.

The Southern Cross, the Little Dipper and other constellations are also noted and named.

825 805 The Nuer firmly believes, as already noted, that the cattle see the new moon the night before it is visible to the human eye. I have frequently asked them concerning this. The date upon which the cattle see the new moon always seems to be the date specified upon the calendar as the date when the new moon should be visible. Yet the Nuer has no calendar.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Chapter Eleven

NUER FOLK-LORE

538 THE Nuer language is rich in folk-lore. Many tales have been handed down from one generation to another. In these tales the people implicitly believe.

Nuer folk-lore may be classed under four different headings. There are tales which relate to the origin and history of the Nuer tribe; some of these have already been given in the text. There are animal and bird stories. There are tales whose central figure is a sort of ogre; these correspond in part to our own fairy tales. There are also riddles, some of them handed down from generation to generation. Several specimens of animal, bird and ogre stories and a few of the Nuer riddles are given here. On some future occasion it may be possible to print a fuller collection, with the Nuer text.

000 Acknowledgements are due to Mrs. P. J. Smith of the American Mission at Nasser, who has been instrumental in getting the Nuer interested in writing their folk-lore for use in the schools, and to Nyan Yut, who wrote down the riddles for me as 'a present to my sister'.

THE COMING OF FIRE

539 Long ago there was no fire in this place. When men wanted food the grains of dura were pounded one by one until the place in which it was pounded was full. Then the pounded dura was ground, wetted, and put to dry in the sun. When the top dried it was picked off and eaten. What remained dried again after a time and was again picked off and eaten until all the dura was finished.

One day Dog set off on his travels to hunt for fire. He arrived at the village of a snake who was cooking food. When he appeared they said 'Make way for the traveller'

[p.88]

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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GOD

*776 Before discussing further the separation of God from man I will mention some of the chief attributes of God. He is in the sky, but his being in the sky does not mean that he is not at the same time elsewhere, and on earth. Indeed, as will be seen, Nuer religious thought cannot be understood unless God's closeness to man is taken together with his separation from man, for its meaning lies precisely in this paradox.

Nuer say that God is everywhere, that he is 'like wind' and 'like air'. According to Father Crazzolara,[1] he may be spoken of by the epithets *jiom*, wind, and *ghau*, universe, but these words only [538] stand for God in poems or in an allegorical sense and are illustrations of the liking the Nilotic peoples show in their poetry for metonymy and synecdoche. God is not wind, but *cere jiom*, like wind; and he is not *ghau*, the universe, but *cak ghaua*, the creator of the universe. Another poetic epithet by which he may be referred to is *tutgar*. This is an ox-name, taken from an ox of the [231] kind Nuer call *wer*, which has wide spreading horns and is the most majestic of their beasts (Plate I). The name is a combination of two words: *tut*, which has the sense of 'strength' or 'greatness', and *gar*, which has the sense of 'omnipresent', as in another of God's titles, *kwoth me gargar*, the omnipresent God (*gargar* can also be translated 'limitless').[2] But the commonest Nuer way of trying to express their idea of the nature of God is to say that he is like wind or air, a metaphor which seems appropriate to us because it is found throughout the hierological literature of the world and we are particularly familiar with it in the Old Testament. Among the Nuer the metaphor is consistent not only with the absence of any fixed abode of God but also of any places where he is thought particularly to dwell, for air and wind are everywhere. Unlike the other spirits God has no prophets or sanctuaries or earthly forms.

*776 196 God, Spirit in the heavens who is like wind and air, is the creator and mover of all things. Since he made the world he is addressed in prayers as *kwoth ghaua*, Spirit of the universe, with the sense of creator of the universe. The word *cak*, used as a noun, can mean the creation, that is, all created things, and hence the

[1] Op. cit. p. 72.

[2] Dr. Mary Smith tells me that if a ne'er-do-well is asked how he expects to live he may reply '*kwoth e gargar*', 'God is limitless' (in his power to aid), in the same way as a man may say of the earth or of the universe that it is *gargar*, limitless.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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the fertility of cows.[1] These various sprites seem to have much the same character as that of the meteorite-sprite and to be treated in a similar way.

A collection of hymns sung to nature sprites might tell us much more than I have recorded about them, but I took down only one specimen,[2] which begins:

> *Biel*, you love a cow in the heavens,
> Son of the master of *deng*, you love a cow in the heavens,
> Say if you want a brown cow,
> Say if you want a white cow,
> The cow of *biel deang* is a cow which will calve.

I quote these lines because, whatever their precise meaning may be, if they have one, they bear the unmistakable imprint of Dinka influence and therefore support the conclusion I reached on other grounds, mainly on the fact that these sprites are little heard of in eastern Nuerland, that the *bieli* have been taken over by the Nuer from their Dinka neighbours. The sprite is represented as the son of the Dinka spirit *deng* and the word I have translated, following Dr. Lienhardt's usage, 'master' in the second line is *bany*, which must in this context be a Dinka word.

Likewise, and even more surely, the fetishes, with which the *bieli* are sometimes classed, may be considered to be of foreign origin and to have been introduced fairly recently into Nuerland. At the time I was living there they were rarely found among the most easterly tribes and those who possessed them there had journeyed to the west of the Nile to purchase them. All Nuer whom I consulted were unanimous that the fetishes are foreign and new, those of the Lou tribe saying that they first began to hear of them in the time of the initiation period of the Dangunga age-set, roughly some 50 years ago. The Nuer got them from the Dinka, but it is highly probable that the Dinka first got them from the Sudanic so-called Jur peoples (*Beli*, *Sofi*, *Gberi*, *Mittu*, and *Lori*).[3] The Nuer have tried, not entirely successfully, to assimilate

[1] P. P. Howell, 'Some Observations on "Earthly Spirits" among the Nuer', *Man*, 1953.

[2] Others have been recorded by Father Crazzolara, op. cit., p. 146, and Dr. Howell, ibid.

[3] The conclusion that they come from the Jur is based partly on what Nuer say and partly on a number of ethnological considerations arising out of my earlier research—much still unpublished—among the Jur and neighbouring peoples. It gains support from a note by Capt. V. H. Ferguson ("Matiang Cob"

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to the north of it, leaving the Keunyang in what had been their common home to the south of it. Quarrels ensued and Keunyang uttered a *biit* making it a condition of any future settlement. Yet another story relates how Jwal and Gaawar (clans, like tribes, are personified in myths) went fishing together. Jwal lacked a pot in which to cook his catch and he asked Gaawar to lend him his pot, but Gaawar refused, so Jwal had to do the best he could with a gourd plastered with mud. To mark this meanness he uttered a *biit* saying that if a member of either clan were to take shelter during rain under the same roof as a member of the other clan lightning would destroy them both. I have heard people shout to a member of one of these clans who had entered a hut for shelter from a storm to get out as there was a member of the other clan present. This story may be connected with the association of the Gaawar clan with sky and rain. There are a number of such stories relating to inter-clan relations which probably mirror actual or historical local and political interrelations which lie outside the present discussion.

A *biit* of a rather different kind is that relating to certain girls called *kuony*, who are said to be dangerous to their husbands. It is said that a girl of this name was affianced by her brothers to a man with some unpleasant complaint. She refused to marry him and was often beaten by her brothers on this score, because the man had many cattle. Eventually she gave way and married him, but then she refused to cohabit with him. Her husband eventually died of his complaint and the girl was left alone in his home, and lions and hyenas came by night and ate the cattle and beasts of the flock, as there was no man in the home to defend it. So she uttered a curse over her kinsmen, saying that in future daughters of their lineage would always bring death to their husbands. I have met *kuony* girls in western Nuerland, where it was pointed out to me that their husbands, as I could see for myself, had died young. However, this does not seem to prevent men from marrying them, and I was told that they are regarded as unusually attractive.

There are also many examples of a *biit* in Nuer just-so stories explaining how animals acquired their characteristics and habits. The giraffe has what looks like a hollow in the top of its head. When his mother died giraffe asked shrewmouse to lend him a hoe to dig a grave in the earth to bury her, but as shrewmouse

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refused to let him have a hoe he had to bury her in his head. As a result of this incident giraffe and shrewmouse uttered conditional curses, giraffe saying that if ever a shrewmouse crossed a path he would die, and shrewmouse saying that if ever a giraffe ate grass he would die. This is why one never sees a shrewmouse on a path unless it be dead,[1] and why one never sees a giraffe eating grass, only the leaves of trees. The mother of goat, in another story, borrowed a knife from the mother of hyena and lost it. The mother of hyena cursed her, saying that in future her descendants would eat gats wherever they found them. This is the reason why goats are always pawing the ground. They are still looking for the lost knife of the mother of hyena. Another story relates how man lost his running-powers to ostrich and ostrich refused to return them. It is because man then cursed the race of ostriches that today men sometimes hunt them for their feathers and lions kill them for meat. Shoebills eat fish and blue herons eat frogs and other small creatures of marsh and shallows. The reason for this is that *bany* the shoebill, and *ngok*, the blue heron, were sons of one father and because *ngok* neglected an uncle's duties to *bany*'s children when their father died, *bany*'s mother cursed him and his descendants. Yet another of many such stories relates how the village mouse, after having taught men how to beget children, taught women how to bear them. In return for this service woman uttered a *biit*, saying that village mice would share the food of the home with its mistress. This last story introduces us to a further sense of the word *biit*, an invocation which is a blessing and not a curse; for a man can *biit* a person to good fortune, as woman did in the case of mouse, instead of to bad fortune. In my experience this sense is rare.

The curse is undoubtedly a powerful sanction of conduct, largely because it is not thought necessary that a wronged man should utter it aloud for misfortune to follow. He has only to think it. Such an unspoken curse Nuer call a *biit loac*, a curse of the heart. Indeed, it would seem that he need not expressly formulate a curse in his mind at all, a mere feeling of resentment arising from a genuine grievance being sufficient to cause injury to the person who occasioned it. Thus I was told that if a man is killed by his wife's brother and the wife laments his death, her sorrow and sighs are themselves a kind of *biit*. God hears them and will cause

[1] Cf. the old belief in England that a shrew cannot cross a footpath and live.

789 is said to have been paid in ransom to the river. The river was
782 bought, as it were, by her sacrifice; just as the hippopotamus had
[538] to buy the river in one of the Nuer just-so stories. Fox had found hippopotamus on land, where he had been created, and exacted from him, in payment for taking him to a river, the flesh around his mouth—which accounts for his funny face today. When they arrived at the river hippopotamus had to pay it (*kok*) the marrow of his leg bones before it would receive him—which accounts for their having no marrow, so Nuer say, in them today. 'Bought' and 'buy' are renderings I discuss below.

782 When in serious sickness an animal is sacrificed Nuer may say
755 *'ca kwoth kok ke yang'*, 'God is paid a cow [in ransom]'. I was present when a Nuer was defending himself against silent disapproval on the part of his family and kinsmen of his frequent sacrifices. He had been given to understand that it was felt that he was destroying the herd from inordinate love of meat. He said that this was not true. The oxen he had killed—and he had killed his own favourite ox among them—had been sacrificed to his mother-in-law's and wife's spirit *deng*, which came from Dinkaland and was frequently troubling his children and his wife and her brother with sickness. It was all very well for his family to say that he had destroyed the herd, but he had killed the cattle for their sakes. It was *'kokene yiekien ke yang'*, 'the ransom of their lives with cattle'. He repeated this phrase many times as one by one he recounted cases of serious sickness in his family and described the ox he had sacrificed on each occasion to placate the spirit *deng*. If his sons saw fit to complain let them regard their sisters. Would they not get the cattle of their sisters' bridewealth? And were not the cattle killed to save their sisters' lives?

782 The word *kuk* would seem therefore to suggest that God, or a
789 spirit, is placed by the sacrifice under an obligation. A woman says 'God, take thy cow and give me a child', and Nuer say of the river-spirit that 'it is given a gift and then it gives life to the people'. The child and the life are given to suppliants in return for the gifts they make. The action of the rite is not effective in itself. God, or a spirit, is not constrained by the sacrifice to grant the favour asked for. An animal sacrificed to God is his animal anyhow, and what he gives the suppliant in return is a *muc*, a free gift. Nevertheless, my impression was, at any rate where spirits of the air and of the earth are concerned, that Nuer feel that the recipient of a sacrifice

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231 883 776 animals, dedicates them to spirits, and in other ways makes formal use of them for religious purposes, nevertheless, the ox a father gives his son at initiation provides him with a direct means of communication with the spiritual world. It is more than a possession, more even than part of his social personality—it is a point of meeting between soul and spirit and has therefore a sacramental character also.

231 553 From the colours, their distribution, the shape of the horns, and other peculiarities of the ox of his initiation a youth takes, or is given by his companions, his *cot thak*, his ox-name. It may be the same word as that by which the ox's markings are indicated, but generally it combines the name for the markings with a prefix descriptive of something connected with the ox. For example, a man whose favourite ox is black and white (*rial*) may call himself *Luthrial* or *Luerial*, *luth* being a large cattle-bell and *lue* a long tassel attached to one of the horns. At first only his age-mates may [561] know his new name, but the older people soon get to know it too, for they hear his mates greet him by it and they also hear him shout it out as he displays himself with the ox in the cattle camps which are formed soon after initiation. Also, young men of about the same age call out their ox-names, with many embellishments, to one another at dances, often after a bout of duelling with clubs, and when in a dance two lines of youths stand opposite each other and shower ox-names on one another preparatory to a spectacular jump into the air in unison.

The calling of a youth by a name the same as, or derived from, that by which his favourite ox is referred to is perhaps the most striking example of, and evidence for, what Professor Seligman speaks of as 'identification'. Indeed, in listening to Nuer poems [538] one is often in doubt whether it is the ox or the man that is being spoken about. The representations are never entirely distinct. Somewhat different, though related and also very striking, is the [552] custom called *thak moc*, the calling out of the (name of the) ox. A man shouts out the name of his favourite ox—the ox's name, not his ox-name, which may be an elaboration of the ox's name —when he hurls his spear at an enemy or at his quarry when hunting or fishing, for example, '*ma rial*', 'black-and-white (ox)', or '*thakda ma rial*', 'my black-and-white ox'. In some of my earlier writings I have translated *moc* by 'invocation' and 'to invoke', following Driberg's translation of the Lango

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seldom go out of their way to kill them. They do not go out to hunt lions, leopards, and hyenas, unless they molest the flocks and herds, and usually they only pursue those graminivorous animals which come to drink near their camps and seem to offer themselves for slaughter. It is not that it is thought to be wrong to kill them, but that except in time of famine, Nuer are little interested in hunting. They speak of it as a Shilluk and Dinka practice beneath the serious attention of a Nuer who can boast of a herd—as a pursuit, that is, of foreigners or of men without cattle. Even those who deliberately set out to hunt elephants and giraffe do so less to obtain meat than to acquire ivory and hair which can be exchanged for cattle, sheep, and goats. This lack of interest in hunting may be due to the fact that their flocks and herds supply them, through sacrifice, with meat and to the nature of their country which renders hunting difficult, but, whatever the reason, they are not interested, so that any killing of animals outside sacrifice is rare; and we may here say again, as has been said before in a rather different context, that the Nuer mind is turned inwards towards his own society of men and cattle. He is not unobservant of nature but he sees it with a contemplative and not with a predatory eye that seeks to destroy and exploit. He sees wild creatures as something in their own right, and his disposition is to live and let live. His folk-stories reflect this attitude and the feeling that killing, like death, is something which has come about almost by accident and is not in the original nature of things.

A large part of Nuer folk-lore consists of stories about animals.[1] There are stories about ogres; a cycle of adventure stories about how cunning fox tricked hyena; many just-so stories which tell why hyenas limp, why plovers have thin legs, why guinea-fowl crouch, why millepedes are blind, why cows have no upper incisors, and so forth; and stories of yet other sorts. God sometimes figures in these stories as a judge in a way which appeals to the Nuer sense of humour as well as to our own. For example, fish, finding that they were visible to man in the water and hence easily speared, appealed to God who let them be invisible. God sometimes figures

[1] I have not published the folk-stories I collected among the Nuer. Some of those given by Miss Huffman (*Nuer Customs and Folk-Lore*, 1931, pp. 88–104) show Anuak influence. Those recorded by Capt. V. H. Ferguson ('Nuer Beast Tales', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1924) have Nuer themes but may be Atwot, or even Mandari, versions of them, for rill, the jackal, and gwog, the hawk, are two main figures in them, and these are not Nuer words.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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538 825 in them because the animals are made to act like men after the manner of fables. They are given human speech and feelings, live in villages and camps, and have kinship relations on the pattern of human relations; and as men stand in a certain relationship to God in real life, so the animals are placed in a similar relationship in the make-believe of the stories. Miss Huffman says of these stories that the Nuer 'implicitly believe' in them.[1] This was not my impression. It appeared to me that they realize that their folk-tales are just tales which are true only in the sense that they are, as we say, true to life, a dramatization of real situations and an accurate characterization of human and animal, and indeed also of spiritual, qualities. It does not, therefore, worry them that their folk-stories may not accord with, and may contradict, both evidences of the senses and those of tradition and myth, and also each other.

538 825 773 These stories reflect an attitude of mind about man's relation to other creatures, and I mention them in this place, without, however, laying great stress on their significance, because they tell of an original age of innocence in which all creatures lived in amity in a common camp. Various stories, though separate tales and not related as parts of a coherent structure or dramatic plan, nevertheless taken together give us a picture of man at that time, or rather in that state, for the setting of myth and folk-lore lies outside time. He is entirely simple. He does not suffer from hunger, because what later became his stomach lives a life of its own in the bush where it feeds on small insects. He does not have to labour to live because, according to another story, which contradicts the last one, a single grain of millet soaked in water makes a sufficient meal. In this Nuer Eden there is no desire and mating, for the male and female organs are also not yet part of man and woman but live apart from them and separate from each other. As other, and once again contradictory, stories have it, man does not know how to beget or woman to bear. Man has no knowledge of fire and he does not know the spear. Then all changed. The new order is sometimes presented as arising from a quarrel in the camp started, it would seem, by fox persuading mongoose to throw a club into elephant's face. The animals separated and each went its own way and began to live as they now live and to kill each other. Stomach entered into man and he is now always hungry. Elephant taught

[1] Ibid., p. 88.